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## THE DATE OF LYCOPHRON.

BY WILLIAM N. BATES.

THE date of the poet Lycophron has never been satisfactorily settled. Writers on the history of Greek literature have been much at variance as to the period in which he lived. Some have thought that he flourished in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.), others in the reign of Ptolemy Euergetes (247-221 B.C.), others again have been satisfied with saying that he flourished about the middle of the third century. The reason for this divergency of opinion is apparent as soon as one looks at the evidence upon which our knowledge of Lycophron rests. The writers who make him flourish in the time of Philadelphus, base their statement upon the scraps of information which the scholiasts and lexicographers have handed down about him; while those who make him flourish in the time of Euergetes throw aside the testimony of the scholiasts and rely upon a passage in the *Alexandra* to show that he flourished at this later date. The passage in question (lines 1226-1280) is a prediction of the coming greatness of Rome, and these writers argue in a seemingly plausible manner that Lycophron could not well have written such a passage before the first Punic war.<sup>1</sup> The other writers, who say that he flourished about the middle of the third century, are simply trying to reconcile these conflicting statements.

This was the state of the case when in 1883 Wilamowitz undertook to settle the date of the composition of the *Alexandra*. He showed that the latest event mentioned in the poem is the murder of Heracles, the seventeen-year-old son of Alexander the Great, in

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<sup>1</sup> Lines 1446-1450 were also appealed to as evidence, in spite of their enigmatical character. For a possible explanation of the references in these lines, see Wilamowitz, *De Lycoph. Alex.*, p. 8 f.

the year 309.<sup>1</sup> The part which Cassander had in this murder and in the previous murders of Olympias, Alexander's mother, and of Roxana and her child is nowhere alluded to. Wilamowitz argued from this that the *Alexandra* was written while Cassander or his sons were in power, that is between 309 and 287. He showed furthermore that Lycophron had part of Timaeus' history before him when he wrote the *Alexandra*, and Timaeus did not begin his work until 310. Hence he argued that it is more likely that the *Alexandra* was written between 300 and 290 than between 309 and 300. Wilamowitz also showed that the *Alexandra* was imitated by Dosiades in his *Βωμός* and hence was written before that poem, which he supposed to have been composed between 285 and 270. Susemihl in his *Geschichte der Griechischen Litteratur in der Alexandrinerzeit*<sup>2</sup> shows that the *Altar* of Dosiades was probably written about 292-290 and hence the *Alexandra*, which preceded it, was probably written about the year 295. Susemihl argues furthermore that the *Alexandra* is the work of a young man, and assuming that Lycophron was thirty or thirty-five years old when he wrote it, he concludes that he must have been born between 330 and 325.

Such is the present state of our knowledge as to the date of Lycophron. The most important point which has been gained is the fact that the *Alexandra* was written about 295. With this point settled, the passage in the *Alexandra* relating to Rome can have no bearing on the date of the poet and may consequently be disregarded.

Additional evidence, however, can be presented which will establish with much more accuracy the date of the poet.

The general period in which Lycophron lived is stated clearly by Tzetzes in his life of Lycophron,<sup>3</sup> where he mentions him as the contemporary of Ptolemy Philadelphus. This statement is repeated in an ancient scholium on line 1226 of the *Alexandra*,<sup>4</sup> and is inferred also from the statement of an anonymous writer on comedy published

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<sup>1</sup> Line 801.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I. p. 274, n. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Tzetz. in Lycophr., ed. Müller, Vol. I. p. 263 f.

<sup>4</sup> *Lycoph.*, ed. Kinkel, p. 179.

by Cramer,<sup>1</sup> and from a fragment of Tzetzes published by Ritschl.<sup>2</sup> But we have more precise information than this. Tzetzes in the fragment just mentioned informs us that Alexander the Aetolian, Lycophron of Chalcis, and Zenodotus of Ephesus were hired by Ptolemy Philadelphus at the royal expense, the first to arrange the tragedies, Lycophron the comedies, and Zenodotus the Homeric poems and the works of other poets which had been collected at Alexandria.<sup>3</sup> This statement is repeated in substantially the same form in the anonymous writer on comedy and in the scholium Plautinum.<sup>4</sup> These passages make it clear that the books which Lycophron, Alexander and Zenodotus were employed to put in order were those which Philadelphus and his father had collected and which formed the beginning of the Alexandrian library. This collecting of books had been going on for some years, and authorities agree that the books were brought together as a library at the very beginning of the reign of Philadelphus, that is between the years 285 and 283, when Philadelphus was king and Ptolemy Soter and Demetrius of Phalerum were still alive. The work of arranging the books must have been done before the library could be of use to any one. That is to say, this work must have been begun by 283 at latest. Moreover, as Tzetzes informs us that Philadelphus hired the men at royal expense, he must have done so after 285, when he became king. Consequently Zenodotus, Lycophron and Alexander must have begun their work of arranging the books during the years 285–283, or perhaps during the year 285–284.

This conclusion accepted, we have a definite point to start from in determining the date of Lycophron, for the dates of his two associates in the work can be estimated with some degree of exactness, and we should not expect Lycophron's age to differ greatly from the ages of the other two. Zenodotus held the most important position

<sup>1</sup> *Anecd. Paris.*, Vol. I. p. 6. Perhaps this is to be ascribed to Tzetzes.

<sup>2</sup> *Opusc.*, Vol. I. p. 206. See also p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> 'Αλέξανδρος ὁ Αἰτωλὸς καὶ Λυκόφρων ὁ Χαλκιδεύς, ἀλλὰ καὶ Ζηνόδοτος ὁ Ἐφέσιος τῷ Φιλαδέλφῳ Πτολεμαίῳ συνωνηθέντες βασιλικῶς, ὁ μὲν τὰς τῆς τραγῳδίας, Λυκόφρων δὲ τὰς τῆς κωμῳδίας βιβλούς διώρθωσαν, Ζηνόδοτος δὲ τὰς Ὀμηρέλους καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ποιητῶν κτλ.

<sup>4</sup> Ritschl, *Opusc.*, Vol. I. p. 5.

of the three; he had charge of all except the dramatic poetry, and was afterwards librarian. We should naturally expect him therefore to be older than Lycophron and Alexander. Now Zenodotus according to Couat<sup>1</sup> was born between 324 and 320, and Alexander<sup>2</sup> about 320; Susemihl<sup>3</sup> gives the dates as about 325 and 315 respectively. Consequently if Lycophron was younger than Zenodotus, he must have been born after 325, but on the other hand, as he wrote the *Alexandra* about 295, he can hardly have been born as late as 315. His birth-year was probably not far from 320.

This date is in a measure confirmed by an additional fact which has been handed down about Lycophron, namely that he was a member of the Alexandrian Pleiad. This Pleiad, as we are informed in a scholium to Hephaestion,<sup>4</sup> consisted of seven tragic poets who all flourished at the same time in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. Their names are given by several authorities, but with some variation. Lycophron is named as a member by all the authorities, and there is sufficient evidence for determining the other six members with considerable certainty.<sup>5</sup> About the dates of two of the mem-

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de la Poésie Alexandrine sous les trois premiers Ptolémées*, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> *Geschichte der Gr. Lit. in der Alexandrinerzeit*, Vol. I. pp. 188, 330.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. I. p. 199, ed. Gaisford.

<sup>5</sup> The lists are as follows:

Schol. Heph. I. p. 57, 10.	Schol. Heph. I. p. 199.	Schol. Heph. I. p. 199, codex S.	Suidas.	Tzetzes.
Homerus	Homerus	Homerus	Homerus	Theocritus
Sositheus	Sositheus	Sositheus	Sositheus	Aratus
Lycophron	Lycophron	Lycophron	Lycophron	Nicanter
Alexander	Alexander	Alexander	Alexander	Aeantides
Philiscus	Aeantides	Dionysiades	Philiscus	Philiscus
Dionysiades	Sosiphanes	Euphronius	Sosiphanes	Homerus
Aeantides	Philiscus	Philiscus	Dionysiades	Lycophron

It is noticed that all five authorities agree on Homer, Lycophron, and Philiscus; four agree about the names of Alexander and Sositheus, and Alexander is still further confirmed by Eudocia, *Viola*, p. 62. Dionysiades is named in three of the lists, and likewise has the testimony of Strabo, p. 675 (Meineke, p. 941, § 15). This makes six of the members of the Pleiad about whom there can be no doubt. About the seventh member, however, authorities disagree. Aeantides has three authorities in his favor; Sosiphanes, two; while Euphronius, Theocritus, Aratus,

bers, namely of Aeantides and Dionysiades, nothing definite is known; but the other four (*i.e.* omitting Lycophron) can all be shown to have flourished in the 124th olympiad, that is 285–281 B.C.<sup>1</sup> I have already shown that Lycophron was engaged in work in the Alexandrian library in the year 285–284. How long he was occu-

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and Nicander have each one. The last three authors, however, were not tragic poets, and their names may consequently be disregarded. Likewise Euphronius; for the only ground for believing that he wrote tragedy is the finding of his name in the scholium mentioned above. In favor of Sosiphanes we have the statements of Suidas and one of the scholia to Hephaestion. But Suidas tells us (*s.v.* Σωσιφάνης) that this poet lived in the time of Philip of Macedon or of Alexander the Great, and furthermore that he died either in the 111th or 114th olympiad. In other words, Sosiphanes died about forty years before the other members of the Pleiad are said to have flourished. Consequently Sosiphanes cannot have been a member of the Pleiad, and the seventh member must therefore have been Aeantides, who has the evidence of three passages in his favor. We must conclude, therefore, that the tragic Pleiad consisted of the following seven writers: Homer, Lycophron, Philiscus, Alexander, Sositheus, Dionysiades, and Aeantides, which is the list of members given by the scholium to Hephaestion, Vol. I. p. 57, 10.

<sup>1</sup> For Homer, see Suidas, *s.v.* "Ομηρος: "Ομηρος γραμματικὸς καὶ τραγῳδιῶν ποιητής, διὸ συνηριθμήθη τοῖς ἐπτά οἱ τὰ δευτερεῖα τῶν τραγικῶν ἔχουσι καὶ ἐκλήθησαν τῆς Πλειάδος. ἤκμαζεν ὀλυμπιάδι ρκδ'. Of Sositheus, Suidas says, *s.v.* Σωσίθεος: Σωσίθεος . . . τῶν τῆς Πλειάδος εἰς, ἀνταγωνιστῆς 'Ομήρου τοῦ τραγικοῦ . . . ἀκμάσας κατὰ τὴν ρκδ' ὀλυμπιάδα. Alexander Aetolus, as has been said, seems to have been born about 320–315, and in the year 285–284 to have been engaged in arranging the tragedies for the Alexandrian library. In 276 he was with Aratus and Antagoras of Rhodes at the court of Antigonus Gonatas, where he stood in high favor (see Vita I. of Aratus in Westermann, *Biog.*, p. 54, and *cf.* Droysen, *Hell.*, Vol. III. p. 197). Thus we can safely say that Alexander flourished as one of the Pleiad at the end of the 124th olympiad. Philiscus, the fourth member whose date we can fix, is described by Suidas (*s.v.* Φιλίσκος) as τραγικὸς καὶ ἱερὲς τοῦ Διονύσου ἐπὶ τοῦ Φιλαδέλφου Πτολεμαίου γεγονώς . . . ἔστι δὲ τῆς δευτέρας τάξεως τῶν τραγικῶν οἰτινὲς εἰσι ζ' καὶ ἐκλήθησαν Πλειάς, κτλ.; and Callixenus, quoted by Athenaeus (V. p. 198 c), says, in describing as an eye-witness the great procession which took place when Philadelphus was crowned king in 285: . . . μεθ' οὓς ἐπορεύετο Φιλίσκος ὁ ποιητής, ἱερὲς ὢν Διονύσου καὶ πάντες οἱ περὶ τὸν Δῖονυσον τεχνῖται. That is, Philiscus enjoyed a reputation as a poet in the year 285, or, in other words, may be said to have flourished in the 124th olympiad. Thus Homer, Sositheus, Alexander, and Philiscus are all shown to have flourished at the same time, as in fact we infer from the scholium to Hephaestion (I. p. 57, 10), and that time was the 124th olympiad, or 285–281 B.C.

pied in this work cannot of course be known, but it must have taken considerable time. Moreover we are informed that he wrote a work on comedy in at least nine books,<sup>1</sup> which it seems likely was the result of his labors in the library. If, then, Lycophron flourished as a tragic poet with the other members of the Pleiad he must have done so towards the end of the 124th olympiad or about the year 281. Therefore if Lycophron was born at the date I have already shown, he must have been about forty years old when he began to flourish as a tragic poet; and this is certainly an age at which a literary man might very naturally be said to flourish.

As to the extent of Lycophron's literary career we have no certain evidence. We are told by Tzetzes that he wrote sixty-four or forty-six tragedies, and Suidas gives us the names of twenty of them. These titles when added to his other works seem to imply a literary career of some length. How long he lived is not known. His death is mentioned in but one place, namely in Ovid's *Ibis*, where the poet says,<sup>2</sup>

Utque cothurnatum periisse Lycophrona narrant  
Haereat in fibris fixa sagitta tuis.

This leads us to infer that Lycophron was killed by an arrow while engaged in some scenic representation. There are three scholia on the passage, but none of them appears to be ancient, and all simply confirm the words of the text without adding anything essential.

At first sight this seems to be all that can be gathered about the death of Lycophron; but after examining the *Ibis* carefully I think we have good grounds for believing that Ovid took this allusion to Lycophron's death from the *Ibis* of Callimachus. For in the first place Ovid himself says that he is imitating that poem.<sup>3</sup> How

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<sup>1</sup> *Ath.* XI. p. 485 d.

<sup>2</sup> Lines 531, 532.

<sup>3</sup> Lines 55-60:

Nunc quo Battiades inimicum devovet Ibin,  
Hoc ego devoveo teque tuosque modo.  
Utque ille, historiis involvam carmina caecis:  
Non solem quamvis hoc genus ipse sequi.  
Illius ambages imitatus in Ibide dicar  
Oblitus moris iudiciiue mei.

closely he did this cannot of course be known, for no vestige of this latter work is extant; but the scholiast on lines 315-316 gives what purports to be a metrical translation of two lines from the Ibis of Callimachus which are very similar to the two lines of Ovid.<sup>1</sup> If this scholium could be relied upon, we should have good grounds for believing that the imitation was a close one.<sup>2</sup> A second point is that in mentioning the death of Lycophron Ovid uses the words 'utque narrant' implying that he is quoting. Again, Lycophron was hardly known to the Romans—in fact he is mentioned but once again in all Latin literature—and it is hard to see why Ovid should have introduced his name here if it had not been suggested to him by finding it in the work he was imitating. For surely Lycophron's death was much less terrible than many of the other misfortunes which he invokes upon the head of his enemy. Again, the enemy against whom Callimachus wrote his Ibis was Apollonius Rhodius, a poet like Lycophron; and hence Callimachus might very fitly hold up the death of Lycophron as an example of what his fate might be. On the other hand Ellis has shown<sup>3</sup> that the enemy whom Ovid attacks was not a poet or literary man, but rather an informer. Thus Ovid can have had no particular reason for mentioning Lycophron's fate unless he was repeating something which he found in Callimachus. In view of these facts, although of course in a case like this certainty is impossible, I think we are justified in assuming

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<sup>1</sup> Ovid's lines are (315, 316):

Utque necatorum Darei fraude secundi  
Sic tua subsidens devoret ora cinis.

While the so-called lines of Callimachus run:

Sic tu depereas sicut periire secundus  
Quos Dareus multo proruerat cinere.

(secundi . . . proruerat, G.; secundus . . . obruerat, C. et Ask.)

Ellis, in his commentary to this passage in his edition of the Ibis (p. 58), says: "Notabilis haec mentio Ibidis Callimacheae, nec video cur non genuina habenda sit."

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the Ibis of Callimachus, see Riese in *Jahr. für Phil.*, Vol. CIX. (1874), pp. 377-381, where Schneider's theory that the Ibis was an epigram is completely refuted. Riese's opinion is approved by Susemihl, *Gesch. Gr. Lit.*, Vol. I. p. 351, n. 19, and by other scholars.

<sup>3</sup> *Proleg. to the Ibis*, p. xxii. fol.



that Ovid took the allusion to Lycophron's death from the Ibis of Callimachus.

If this is granted, an approximate date can be established for the death of Lycophron; for Lycophron must have died before the Ibis of Callimachus was written. Now it is agreed that this poem was written about two years before the hymn to Apollo,<sup>1</sup> which Richter<sup>2</sup> and Couat<sup>3</sup> think was composed in 248. Susemihl<sup>4</sup> says it was written either in this year or in 263, and argues in defence of the latter date. If, then, the hymn to Apollo was written in 248, the Ibis must have been written about 250, before which time Lycophron must have died; or if we accept the date preferred by Susemihl, which certainly seems reasonable, Lycophron must have been dead by 265. But he cannot have died very long before this date; for if he wrote the greater part of his tragedies after he left the Alexandrian library, as is probable, the time necessary for their composition obliges us to suppose that he lived until very nearly the year in question.

To resume briefly, the life of Lycophron was about as follows. He was born between 325 and 320, wrote his *Alexandra* about 295, was appointed to arrange the comedies in the Alexandrian library in 285-284; about 280 he was flourishing as a tragic poet, and continued as such down to the time of his death, which must have occurred before the year 250, and probably shortly before the year 265.

<sup>1</sup> See Susemihl, *Gesch. Gr. Lit.*, Vol. I. p. 384, n. 51; also Apollon. Vita I., Westerm., *Biog.*, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Kallimachos, *Hymnen*, p. 6 and fol.

<sup>3</sup> *La Poésie Alexand.*, pp. 229-235.

<sup>4</sup> *Gesch. Gr. Lit.*, Vol. I. pp. 361, 362.